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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Acharya	(Nepal)
later:	Ms. Bolaños-Pérez (Vice-Chairman)	(Guatemala)
later:	Mr. Acharya	(Nepal)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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06-55194 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/61/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/61/70)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/61/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/61/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/61/62)

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/61/66)

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/61/23 and A/61/121)

1. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom), noting that the United Kingdom was the administering Power for 10 of the Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, said that the basis of her Government's policy towards its Overseas Territories was that the citizens of each one must determine whether they wished to stay linked to the United Kingdom. Successive Governments had given every encouragement to those Territories which wished to proceed to independence as an option. The consultation process between the United Kingdom and its Territories continued through annual meetings of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, a forum for dialogue between democratically elected chief ministers from the Territories and British Government ministers. The agenda for the November 2006 meeting in London would cover a range of issues, including the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Territories, constitutional modernization, good governance and aspects of the United Kingdom's international obligations.

2. The Overseas Territories had been invited to review and propose ways of modernizing their Constitutions, and such discussions were under way with representatives of Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands. A new Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution had come into force in August, the successful conclusion of a four-year review process. The negotiations on the new constitution for Gibraltar had now been completed and the agreed text would soon be put to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum.

3. In supporting its Overseas Territories, her Government focused on increasing local capacity and promoting sustainable development. Its funding contributed to improving governance and promoting political and economic transparency; ensuring security; reducing vulnerability to natural and non-natural disasters; encouraging more diversified economic development; and supporting environmental management. Her Government also encouraged the Territories to strengthen relations with the European Commission in order to improve access to trade and to European economic and developmental aid.

4. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations made by the Special Committee on decolonization in its report (A/61/23). It was the responsibility of all administering Powers to create conditions in the Territories under their control that enabled their people freely to exercise the right to self-determination. All administering Powers were also urged to work with the Special Committee.

5. The specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations, which had unfortunately been remiss for the most part, must increase their assistance to the Territories. The United Nations system must also work towards the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on self-determination as an available option. The Special Committee seminars and the United Nations visiting missions to the Territories should continue.

6. Decolonization, a major United Nations achievement, was far from complete, and progress at the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was particularly discouraging. Implementation of the decolonization mandate was the key, and required a coordinated response from the United Nations system and the administering Powers, as urged in the Special Committee's Plan of Implementation (A/60/853). The engagement of New Zealand in Tokelau's process of

self-determination had been exemplary, and should serve as a guide for other administering Powers and Territories.

7. There was no alternative to the fundamental human right of self-determination. In Western Sahara, where that right faced a complex challenge, Pakistan urged the brother nations involved in the dispute to agree to a mutually acceptable, negotiated and peaceful settlement that provided for self-determination by the people in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Other situations around the globe, not limited to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, involved colonialism, illegal occupation and alien subjugation of peoples. In the Middle East, for example, the Palestinian people were being denied their right to determine their own fate, although the freedom and prosperity of the countries of the region and beyond depended on a just and lasting solution of that issue. Also, the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized in several Security Council resolutions and a settlement of the dispute there was central to the establishment of durable peace in south Asia. A solution acceptable to Pakistan, India and, above all, the people of Jammu and Kashmir was essential, and was a subject of his Government's ongoing dialogue with India.

8. **Mr. Kumaran** (India) said that, even in the new century, the Organization continued to grapple with the vestiges of colonialism, a bygone system that ran counter to its fundamental principles. Sixteen areas still remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations approach to the task ahead must blend urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection, taking into account — on a case-by-case basis — the needs of the people of the Territories, their special circumstances, their political aspirations and their stage of development. It was crucial to inform those people of the legitimate political options available to them, namely, independence or free association or integration with a State. Two important tools for remedying a lack of information in the course of decolonization were the visits of United Nations missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, which needed the full cooperation of administering Powers, and the holding of regional seminars by the Special Committee; and it might be useful to combine both as a way of obtaining first-hand information on local conditions and ascertaining the wishes of the people involved.

9. The role of the administering Powers was an important one, and each should work in a positive spirit with the Special Committee to tailor specific action plans for the Territories for which it was responsible. The referendum held in Tokelau was one such example of partnership. The Chairman of the Special Committee had rightly stated that the focus should now be on producing a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system, so as to complete decolonization by 2010. As a founding member of the United Nations and of the Special Committee, India stood in solidarity with other erstwhile colonized peoples and nations.

10. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) observed that in the current year, the people of Tokelau had in a historic referendum been given the opportunity to exercise their right to determine their own future status. Another people whose Territory — Western Sahara — was the last to be decolonized in Africa was still waiting to be able to exercise that same right, having seen its decolonization process brutally interrupted in 1975 when it was invaded, occupied and dismembered by its neighbour to the north. Since then, Morocco had resorted to unilateral acts, unkept promises and foot-dragging in order to head off a genuine referendum, in an attempt to establish a de facto situation that would give it unrecognized sovereignty over a Territory it occupied by force. Morocco had unilaterally and arbitrarily rejected the 1990 Settlement Plan, the 1997 Houston Accords and the 2003 Peace Plan, all concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and unanimously approved by the Security Council, and had proposed instead a spurious internal autonomy plan. It was, furthermore, terrorizing the Saharan population to discourage them from putting forward their legitimate claims, all the while maintaining a blackout on information and denying outside access to the Territory.

11. Algeria shared common borders and a common destiny with the parties to the conflict and remained convinced that the only just and lasting solution was the holding of a free referendum according to United Nations standards, that would include the option of independence. Algeria thus continued to endorse the Peace Plan as the best political settlement to the conflict. The international community and especially the Security Council must reject any approach that would be a departure from international legitimacy or

would deny the Saharan people their inalienable right to self-determination.

12. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) observed that there were still 2 million people living in 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, despite the declaration of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the reiteration in the 2005 World Summit Outcome of the need to respect the right to self-determination of people which remained under colonial domination and foreign occupation. Member States all aspired to bring the decolonization process to an early conclusion, and therefore had a duty to take an active interest in helping dependent peoples to exercise that right. The Committee shouldered a major responsibility in that regard and had made vigorous efforts, strengthening its links with the Territories by various means and encouraging closer cooperation with the administering Powers. China had always supported the rights of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

13. *Ms. Bolaños-Pérez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

14. **Mr. Panggabean** (Indonesia) said that decolonization had become increasingly complex and required new and innovative solutions. While his delegation shared the view that each decolonization scenario had special characteristics, the decolonization of the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories was proceeding very slowly. Specific tasks requested by the General Assembly in connection with the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had not been fully carried out, and analysis of the Territories had shown that there was an information deficit. Accordingly, the peoples of the Territories must be made fully aware of all the options available. There should be further cooperation among the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and between those bodies and the Committee with a view to enhancing the provision of assistance to the Territories, especially in the areas of education and manpower development.

15. Noting that Tokelau was the exception to the slow process of decolonization, he hailed the referendum held in February 2006 as an important step in the process and looked forward to the second referendum to be held in November 2007. Indonesia welcomed the willingness of the Government of Fiji to host the Pacific Regional Seminar in November 2006 and underlined the importance of the seminars as a forum for a productive exchange of views on the challenges being faced by the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the role that the United Nations might play in the development process. The international community should bring the decolonization process to a successful conclusion and commit to making the twenty-first century free from colonialism.

16. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that self-determination was a fundamental human right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It was surprising and unfortunate to have 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, prompting the General Assembly to declare a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. He called on the administering Powers to speed up the process of self-determination in the remaining Territories.

17. Namibia had noted with concern that the administering Powers had not provided the United Nations with information on the economic, social and educational conditions in the Territories, as required by Article 73 *e* of the Charter and therefore supported the call by the Secretary-General to discuss the matter in the Special Committee.

18. His delegation was deeply concerned over current developments with regard to the question of Western Sahara. The inalienable right to self-determination of the Saharan people was not negotiable, as agreed by the African Union and the United Nations. Any attempt to assert otherwise was a clear violation of the rights of the Saharan people. Namibia encouraged the strengthening of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to enable it to continue monitoring the ceasefire agreement and human rights violations in Western Sahara. He called for the urgent implementation of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions to enable the people of Western Sahara to hold a free and fair referendum to determine their own future.

19. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara (A/61/121). Despite the political deadlock, there had been some positive developments, including the nomination of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara; the designation of a new Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of

MINURSO; the active cooperation of the parties with MINURSO in marking and detonating unexploded mines and ammunition; the release of the Moroccan prisoners of war by Frente POLISARIO; the considerable progress made in the restructuring of MINURSO; and the broad recognition of the international community of the need to arrive at a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara.

20. The search for a lasting solution must take place in a calm and stable environment. That would hinge on agreement between Morocco and Algeria, two countries united by geography, history, culture and the common goal of building the Arab Maghreb Union, one of the pillars of the African Union. Warning against any attempt to prolong the deadlock, he said that maintaining the status quo was not an option. The international community must help to break the deadlock, which could cause instability in the region and threaten international peace and security.

21. The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy should help to find a dynamic political compromise taking into account international law and the political situation of the region. In that connection, he looked forward to the recommendations of the Personal Envoy following his upcoming visit in order to assess the situation with the relevant parties and neighbouring States. Those recommendations should allow the Security Council to take appropriate and constructive decisions on the question of Western Sahara, with achievable goals. He welcomed Morocco's full willingness to engage in a sincere dialogue in an effort to achieve a definitive and realistic solution to the question. He welcomed the reactivation of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS), which invited Saharan leaders to join the discussions on a draft plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara to be submitted in the near future to the United Nations.

22. The human dimension of the conflict could not be ignored. His delegation welcomed the resumption of the programme of exchange of family visits and encouraged MINURSO to support other confidence-building measures. He reaffirmed his delegation's firm position on the need to maintain the territorial integrity of Morocco and called on all parties to resume their talks in an effort to arrive at a just and lasting solution. The international community should hold a debate aimed at finding an innovative and practical solution to the long-standing conflict.

23. **Mr. Abolhassani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Nations should endeavour to maintain the issue of decolonization as one of the priority items on its agenda as long as people were still living in Non-Self-Governing Territories. To make the process more effective, the Committee needed an official and respectful relationship with the administering Powers. The Islamic Republic of Iran supported, along with other Member States, the efforts and initiatives of the Committee aimed at the eradication of colonialism.

24. Raising awareness of people living under colonial rule about their right to self-determination was critical. Any decision taken regarding the status of Non-Self-Governing Territories, such as de-listing, should be transparent, comply with the true process of decolonization and ensure that the people were able to take informed decisions about their future. It was the obligation of the administering Powers to meet the informational needs of the Territories. The flow of information would enable the people to know which stage of the decolonization process they had reached, and what they should do to reach their final goals. It would also maintain the Special Committee abreast of the economic, political, social and educational conditions of the Territories and enable it to make meaningful progress in the decolonization process. His delegation recognized the effective role of the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs and encouraged them to enhance their efforts. Visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories also provided an effective means to assess the conditions and aspirations of the people living there. The Special Committee should continue to seek the formal and timely cooperation of the administering Powers in holding regional seminars, submitting information in a timely fashion under Article 73 *e* and dispatching visiting missions.

25. It was the obligation of the administering Powers to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and to safeguard their natural resources and cultural heritage. In that connection, any activity by the administering Powers aimed at the exploitation of marine, natural and human resources should take into account the interests of the people, including the indigenous populations. Any activity that might adversely affect the interests of the people should be expressly avoided by the administering Powers. The administering Powers must take all

necessary steps to protect the property rights of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The military installations and activities of some administering Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories were a source of serious concern. The interests of the people must be duly taken into account and their views fully respected by the administering Powers.

26. *Mr. Acharya (Nepal) resumed the Chair.*

27. **Mr. Outlule** (Botswana) said that it was entirely feasible for the people of Western Sahara to achieve a just, peaceful and durable political settlement and he encouraged them to persist in demanding their inalienable right to determine their destiny. It was deeply regrettable that the matter was still on the agenda of the United Nations. The legal position, as set out by the International Court of Justice in 1975, was clear: there was no tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or Mauritania. Resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in 1983, referred to Morocco's commitment to accept the holding of a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. The African Union expected that commitment to be honoured.

28. The issue had been taken up in General Assembly resolution 40/50, which made it clear that the question of Western Sahara was not a bilateral matter but the responsibility of the United Nations as a whole. The process had been carried a stage further by the adoption of Security Council resolution 621 (1988), which authorized the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative for the region and requested him to report on the holding of a referendum for self-determination. Many resolutions had been adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council calling for the implementation of the Settlement Plan so that the people of Western Sahara could choose between independence and integration with Morocco. Failure to implement the Plan would be a betrayal not only of the people of Western Sahara but also the principles on which the United Nations was founded. Moreover, the United Nations should recognize the implications of failure or refusal by a Member State to implement its decisions. Meanwhile, the principled position of the African Union remained unchanged.

29. The right of the people of Western Sahara to choose between independence and integration with Morocco posed no threat to any one. It could not be ascertained in advance how they would vote, but his delegation had faith in the democratic process and would accept the result of a free, fair and impartial referendum, which should include the option of integration with Morocco, as the will of the people of Western Sahara.

30. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that the midterm review of the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had shown that it was crucial for the United Nations to redouble its efforts to accelerate the decolonization efforts in the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Self-determination could not materialize overnight. It was a long and gradual process that should involve discussions between the administering Powers and the people of the Territories. The decolonization process should include the political, economic and social empowerment of the inhabitants of the Territories, in order to help them realize their political destiny. It was therefore important to create conditions of stability, well-being and respect for the principle of equal rights. The offers of scholarships by Member States were to be commended.

31. Visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories acted as a catalyst of decolonization, in that they made it possible to assess the type of assistance that the United Nations system could provide for the process of self-determination. In that connection, his delegation commended the efforts of New Zealand in facilitating the referendum held in Tokelau at the beginning of 2006 and acknowledged the assistance and support offered by France to the people of New Caledonia. It was, however, important that local people should be involved in governmental and social structures.

32. In the conviction that regional seminars provided colonial peoples with the opportunity to voice their concerns and aspirations, Fiji had agreed to host the Pacific Regional Seminar in Nadi from 28 to 30 November 2006. The seminar would review the progress achieved in implementing the Plan of Action of the International Decade. It would also assess the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, particularly their evolution towards self-government.

33. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, there was an urgent need to revive the dialogue between the parties concerned in order to prevent further deterioration in the human rights situation. His delegation continued to support the Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara. The situation would remain unresolved until the parties cooperated and the free choice of its people was acknowledged. His delegation commended the United Nations agencies for their work in providing humanitarian assistance to refugee camps and in coordinating the exchange of family visits between refugees from Western Sahara living in Algeria and their relatives in the territory. It supported the extension of the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2006.

34. **Mr. Arias Cárdenas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, as a country that had suffered greatly from colonial exploitation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attached great importance to the Committee's work. The country owed its freedom to the sacrifice of all its peoples and the historic example of its Liberator, Simon Bolivar, whose ideology was incorporated in the 1999 Constitution. The change in the country's name signified a real change in the concept of the State and its international relations. In that connection, it was noteworthy that the Venezuelan army had left its borders only to help its neighbours in the struggle against the colonial Power of the time.

35. The Constitution stated that the aim of the State was to establish a democratic, participatory, proactive, multi-ethnic and multicultural society. The country's approach to foreign relations meanwhile was to respect the principles of independence, equality, self-determination and non-intervention. On international solidarity, the Constitution introduced two new ideas: to help peoples in their struggle for their emancipation and to promote the practice of democracy in international bodies. In accordance with those principles, the Government supported countries still under foreign domination and engaged fully in regional and international cooperation.

36. States should respect the right of all peoples to self-determination, without external interference, and observe the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, including those relating to territorial integrity. That point was also made by General Assembly resolution 59/136, particularly paragraphs 11 and 15. His delegation therefore reiterated its position that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands formed an inalienable part of the territory of Argentina, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), paragraph 6. In such a case, the principle of self-determination did not apply, since the populations of the islands in question had been installed by the occupying Power.

37. One Latin American nation, Puerto Rico, had still not exercised its right to self-determination and independence. His delegation reaffirmed its view that the country should achieve its independence and called for the implementation of a mechanism to ensure the full participation of all Puerto Ricans in resolving its political status.

38. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, unfortunately, insufficient attention and resources had been devoted to implementing Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations and a range of General Assembly resolutions that laid down systematic procedures for Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve a full measure of self-government. The result was that the business of decolonization was unfinished. The member States of CARICOM had therefore extended to the remaining seven Non-Self-Governing Territories in the region official status in the Community. Provision had been made for their participation in a variety of CARICOM institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank, the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. Several were also members or associate members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and some belonged to the Eastern Caribbean Currency Authority or the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

39. Interaction with the international community served to prepare small island territories to assume full self-government. CARICOM therefore favoured the participation of the Caribbean Territories in programmes of the Economic and Social Council. The level of political and constitutional progress, however, remained insufficient in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. CARICOM reiterated its commitment to the principles of self-determination and decolonization. It also endorsed various resolutions by the Committee in identifying how the process could be completed.

40. Two recommendations already adopted by the General Assembly were critical. The first had been

that, under the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, analytical studies on the prevailing political conditions should be carried out. Admittedly, annual reports by the Secretariat on each Territory provided useful statistical and other information, but more in-depth political analysis was required. Only one Non-Self-Governing Territory had achieved full self-government under the present procedure over the past 15 years, so innovations were clearly required. In that connection, it was encouraging that the Committee was to consider the appointment of an eminent Caribbean scholar and an independent expert, with no financial implications to the Committee, to undertake such essential analyses and report to Member States.

41. The second recommendation had been that a work programme should be prepared for each small island territory, on a case-by-case basis. His delegation called for the relevant administering Powers to work with the Committee on such programmes.

42. CARICOM fully endorsed the Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007 contained in document A/60/853, which identified action to be taken by the relevant United Nations bodies, administering Powers and experts. The Secretary-General should give consideration to the recommendations made, given that the International Decade was fast coming to an end.

43. CARICOM also reaffirmed its support for the achievement of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, reiterated its calls for full implementation of the Peace Plan and expressed concern for the continued political deadlock which could cause increased instability in the region.

44. The continuation of colonialism in any form in the twenty-first century was an anachronism. While the internal constitutional modernization undertaken by administering Powers in some Non-Self-Governing Territories was welcome, such colonial reforms did not address the fundamental need for true self-determination and, ultimately, decolonization. CARICOM was concerned that one administering Power no longer offered the status of free association to the territories it administered in the Caribbean.

45. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) recalled that Member States had pledged their commitment to the decolonization process in the Declaration on decolonization, the Millennium Declaration, the World Summit Declaration and General Assembly resolution 60/119 of 8 December 2005. The United Nations had made significant progress towards eradicating colonialism. However, it was undeniable that considerable work remained to be done; 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories still aspired to the goal of self-determination. In particular, efforts should be redoubled to intensify the dissemination of information and to provide training to the people of those Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations Special Missions to Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands had revealed that there was lack of information on self-determination within the Territories themselves. Visiting missions were not only a tool for assessing the local socio-political situation; they were an effective means of informing people about their rights.

46. Noting that there could be no further progress without the full cooperation of the administering Powers, he called for increased cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers. Furthermore, it was essential for resolutions to be adopted following a genuine consensus among Member States. The Chairman of the Special Committee had prepared a Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007 contained in document A/60/853, which identified a need for new and innovative measures to enable the United Nations to carry out its mandate of assisting Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve self-determination. The plan recommended the appointment of an independent expert who would assist the Special Committee in analysing the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and monitoring the implementation of resolutions. His delegation called for further consideration of that recommendation.

47. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa) said that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic was a member of the African Union whose independence had been recognized by many African countries. At the same time, Morocco was also a friendly African country. He hoped that those two African nations would find a way to resolve their differences, differences that remained a challenge for the continent. Indeed, his delegation was concerned over the fact that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic was still listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory by the United Nations. The Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara, which had been prepared by the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General,

Mr. James Baker III, had provided a fair way of seeking a solution that would enable the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. Although the Security Council had reaffirmed its support for that Plan, Morocco had yet to accept it unconditionally. Indeed, the Secretary-General had stated that a new plan would probably be rejected by Morocco unless it excluded the provision for a referendum with independence as an option, yet the United Nations could not endorse a plan that excluded a genuine referendum. It was clear that the impasse between Morocco and the Saharan people would remain unresolved until the Saharan people were able to exercise their right of self-determination in the form of a referendum endorsed in the Peace Plan.

48. His delegation was concerned over Morocco's non-compliance with the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. General Assembly resolution 60/114 on Western Sahara had yet to be implemented. His delegation welcomed the fact that POLISARIO had continued to maintain its support for the Peace Plan and had released the remaining Moroccan prisoners of war. On 25 March 2006, the King of Morocco had pardoned 216 prisoners, including 30 Saharan activists. It was regrettable that the Moroccan forces had intervened to disperse the people who had gathered to celebrate the release of those activists. His delegation called on the Government of Morocco and POLISARIO to redouble their efforts to find a way out of the impasse, commended the role of MINURSO in enforcing the ceasefire agreement and urged all parties to cooperate with MINURSO. He hoped that the United Nations would not endorse any plan that excluded a free and fair referendum and denied the Saharan people their fundamental right to opt for self-determination.

49. **Mr. Onanga M. Ndiaye** (Gabon) said that his delegation was firmly committed to the principle of multilateralism in international relations and acknowledged the central role of the United Nations, which had made a significant contribution to decolonization in Africa. However, it was important to ensure that the resolutions on decolonization were implemented, which was why his delegation supported the annual review of the implementation of such resolutions. Following the midterm review of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it was necessary to step up efforts in the areas of information and training in order to promote social and economic growth in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation was concerned by the fact that the resolution on Western Sahara had not been fully implemented in spite of the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. It was convinced that progress could only be made with the cooperation of all parties involved and the support of the international community and expressed the hope that those parties would make every effort to find a peaceful solution in the Maghreb region.

50. **Ms. Katabarwa** (Uganda) said it was lamentable that in the twenty-first century there were still peoples and Territories that did not have the same rights as full Members of the United Nations and her delegation called for the fulfilment of their right to self-determination. Her delegation supported the right of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic to self-determination in accordance with the various resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and called on the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to continue their efforts to ensure that the question of Western Sahara was resolved in a timely manner. It was imperative that all parties involved should cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to resolve that long-standing issue.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

51. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Venezuela regarding the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom's position on the issue was well known and had been set out in detail by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in a letter to the Secretary-General on 27 April 2006. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

52. **Mr. Singh** (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the remarks made by the representative of Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, said that, in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives, Pakistan was seeking to divide the ranks of those who supported the sovereignty of Lebanon and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation wished to reaffirm that India would not change its policy with

respect to Lebanon and the rights of the Palestinian people.

53. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said, with respect to the Indian representative's remarks on the self-determination of the people of Kashmir, that his delegation had merely stated facts when referring to the state of Kashmir and the question of the Middle East and Palestine. The representative of India had completely misconstrued his delegation's statement.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.